

# Private land conservation and the West Kootenay

---

## Wayne Stetski

Conservation in the West Kootenay involves a diverse range of organizations working at varying scales and scope. Last October, the East Kootenay Conservation Program and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program – Columbia Basin co-hosted a stakeholder’s workshop in Nelson, B.C., to consider the question: “Is there interest in a new integrated partnership to achieve conservation objectives on private land in the West Kootenay?” The answer from about 80% of the 41 participants was “Yes, we support a new partnership that builds on the model and success of the East Kootenay Conservation Program while recognizing the unique conservation needs and priorities in the West Kootenay.” The participants included representatives from environmental organizations, local government (elected officials), provincial and federal governments, Selkirk College, Teck Metals, Columbia Power Corporation, land trusts, Streamkeepers’ groups, and private consultants.

The East Kootenay Conservation Program was established in 2002 to co-ordinate and facilitate conservation efforts on private land and to generate the support and resources needed to maintain this effort. Dedicated to conserving natural areas, the Program now has over 50 partners including conservation and agricultural organizations, forestry and business, and education groups, First Nations, and all levels of government. The vision is to have landscapes in the Kootenays that sustain naturally functioning ecosystems, which in turn support economic and social well-being.

Three committees help keep the Program focussed:

- a Steering Committee to provide overall direction,
- a Stewardship Committee to share knowledge on good conservation practices, and
- a Securement Committee to co-ordinate the purchase of private land for conservation in both the East and West Kootenays.

The Program also administers a unique property-tax-based fund for the Regional District of East Kootenay—the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund.

### Citation –

Stetski, W. 2011. *LINK News*: Private land conservation and the West Kootenay. *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management* 11(3):xx. <http://jem.forrex.org/index.php/jem/article/view/96/42>

One of the questions addressed by the workshop participants focussed on the proposed relationship between East Kootenay Conservation Program and a new organization in the West. The response was: “to bring the best aspects of the EKCP model to the West Kootenay but recognize the unique conservation priorities in the west through the establishment of regional subcommittees and by acknowledging and reflecting the unique patterns of land ownership, land tenure, land use and the relevant stakeholders that need to be involved to make this an effective initiative.”

Another important question was related to funding. Non-profit conservation organizations all require funding to exist. For instance, the East Kootenay program has six funders that are key to achieving its objectives: Columbia Basin Trust, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Regional District of East Kootenay, Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service), Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (Columbia Basin), and Nature Conservancy of Canada. Workshop participants supported establishing their own “Local Conservation Fund,” securing diverse funding sources, and perhaps offering conservation services for a fee. “Growing the funding pie” was the preferred way to the future.

So what are the next steps along the road to co-ordinating private land conservation in the West Kootenay? Fifteen of the participants expressed an interest in working with the workshop hosts to organize follow-up meetings. Judging by the energy and enthusiasm of those who participated at the Nelson workshop, the Kootenay Boundary region of British Columbia faces an exciting conservation future.

To read the entire workshop summary go to <http://www.ekcp.ca> and click on “Updates and Events.”

### Contact Information

Wayne Stetski is Manager of the East Kootenay Conservation Program, based at 1453 Mt. Fisher Crescent, Cranbrook, BC V1C 7J6. Email: [info@ekcp.ca](mailto:info@ekcp.ca)